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ВЗАИМОСВЯЗЬ ЯЗЫКА И МЫШЛЕНИЯ НА ПРИМЕРЕ НЕОЛОГИЗМОВ

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Взаимосвязь языка и мышления является одной из актуальных проблем современной лингвистики. Язык представляет собой материальное средство выражения когнитивных процессов, происходящих в обществе и общественном сознании. В статье приводятся аргументы того, что мышление включает в себя формирование и систематизацию знаний и информации, в то время как язык отражает социально-культурные явления. Автор статьи анализирует, как лексическая структура языка зависит от социального мышления и общественного менталитета. Неологизмы являются показателем того, какие изменения происходят в общественном сознании. Автор предполагает, что неологизмы являются наглядным примером связующего звена между мышлением и языком. В статье рассматриваются и приводятся примеры трех видов неологизмов: появившиеся в английском языке в результате «гендерной асимметрии»; неологизмы, возникшие в период пандемии COVID-19; неологизмы, распространившиеся в результате популярности социальных сетей. Язык и мышление не статичны и распространение неологизмов является ярким тому подтверждением.

Ключевые слова: язык, мышление, лингвистика, неологизм, гендерная асимметрия, COVID-19, социальная сеть.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND THINKING ON THE EXAMPLE OF NEOLOGISMS

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The relationship between language and thinking is one of the urgent problems of modern linguistics. Language is a material means of expressing cognitive processes that take place in society and public consciousness. The article argues that thinking involves the formation and systematization of knowledge and information, while language reflects socio-cultural phenomena. The author analyzes how the lexical structure of a language depends on social thinking and social mentality. Neologisms are an indicator of what changes are taking place in public consciousness. The author suggests that neologisms are a clear example of the link between thinking and language. The article examines and provides examples of three types of neologisms: those that appeared in English as a result of "gender asymmetry"; neologisms that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic; neologisms that spread as a result of the popularity of social networks. Language and thinking are not static, and the proliferation of neologisms is clear confirmation of this.

Keywords: language, thinking, linguistics, neologism, gender asymmetry, COVID-19, social network.

The relationship between language and thinking, as well as the specific nature of this connection, is among the main and urgent issues of theoretical linguistics and philosophy of language. Philosophers of the 18th century noted that every language is a designation of thoughts and, vice versa, the best way to designate thoughts is through language, which is the greatest means of understanding oneself and others. In this sense, thinking is equal to and means talking [9, p. 238].

Language acts as logical support for thinking, and serves as a material exponent of sociocultural characteristics and trends. In other words, language is a tool for expressing formed thoughts [10; 13]. While the main goal of thinking is the formation and systematization of new knowledge, the function and role of language is to “serve” cognitive activity through the formation of thoughts and consolidation of information and knowledge.

It is fundamentally important to note that both thinking and language are dynamic rather than static. Social thinking reflects the state of a particular society; despite all imaginable contradictions with personal consciousness, it is nevertheless contained in the consciousness of every individual as a member of society [8]. Generally speaking, social thinking is similar to mentality.

For this study, the materials include modern English dictionaries [18; 19; 20; 21; 22], as well as articles and extracts from contemporary newsletters, newspapers and various online resources [23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29]. The methods employed in this research include: the descriptive method, aimed at studying the appearance and usage of neologisms in modern language; the structural method, aimed at describing neologisms in the linguistic system; component analysis, aimed at identifying semantic components; the introspective method, allowing the researcher to utilize personal observations; and the method of formalization, through which the author can structure and frame the results.

Language responds and reacts to changes in social thinking in various ways. The most prominent manifestation is the emergence of neologisms [6; 11]. This process is natural, since language reacts vividly to the appearance of phenomena important to society. The most significant aspect of the linguistic trend associated with neologism formation and spread is the naturalness of this process. Language itself responds to changes occurring in social thinking [12]. This is why new words take root quickly; they simplify the communication process and enrich it, firmly establishing themselves in active vocabulary. Another example of the impact of thinking on language is the appearance or replacement of certain familiar concepts [15]. However, this process is mostly artificial for language. The following analysis examines different ways in which new words (neologisms) become an integral part of language.

1. Neologisms which appeared due to “gender asymmetry”.

The urgent topic of feminism has been developing globally for recent decades, and discussions about “gender asymmetry” have also been circulating. Feminatives are mainly artificially introduced into language—specifically, feminine words that can be an alternative or complement to similar masculine concepts that can be applied to all people, regardless of their gender. Focusing on the Russian language, the peculiarity of feminatives is associated, above all, with professions. Some feminatives (“tkalia”), which were widely used in Old Russian language, are not utilized anymore nowadays. In the Russian language, “male” names prevailed because many professions were not accessible to women.

Research shows that the rapid appearance of new feminatives in the Russian language took place at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, as many professions previously available in Russia only to men, became also widespread among women (“pianistka”, “uchitel'nitsa”). Such word creation met much resistance from part of society. Since the 1930s, feminatives have been rarely mentioned in official documents. In the Russian language, the second wave of the feminatives' launch is associated with late 19th – early 20th centuries, when the issue of professional equality between men and women became the focus of public attention and, consequently, thinking. Let us note that in the Russian language the feminatives are formed by adding the suffix -sh- to the masculine stem (“vahtior” → “vahtiorsha”), -k- (“student” → “studentka”), -schits- (“banshik” →

“banshitsa”) and – nits – (“pisatel” → “pisatelnitsa”). At the same time, the designation of some professions in the feminine gender does not exist (for example, “linguist”) or has some connotation of disdain (“doctorsha”). “There are just a few of occupations in the feminine gender that are not derived from the name of the same profession in the masculine gender. For example, “technichka” arrives from the definition of “technical worker”, but not from the profession “technician” [3].

If in the Russian language the attempt to overcome “gender asymmetry” is mostly linked with professions, in the English language, in order to overcome “inequality”, a policy of replacing traditional concepts is being launched [14]. Initially, there was the artificial formation of the word “herstory” instead of “history”. Herstory is a term for history written from a feminist perspective and emphasizing the role of women. It originated as an alteration of the word “history”, as part of a feminist critique of conventional historiography, which in their opinion is traditionally written as “his story”, from the male worldview [4]. Nevertheless, this new word did not become popular in the English language due to its artificial nature.

Another effort to overcome “gender asymmetry” is a suggestion to add “he OR SHE”, “his OR HER” in almost every sentence in the English language. Thus, it is strongly advised to replace the neutral sentence “Everybody dreams that one day he will travel round the globe” with “Everybody dreams that one day he OR SHE will travel round the globe”, the same way it is recommended to say or write “Every student wants to pass his OR HER exams well” instead of “Every student wants to pass his exams well”. It is interesting to note that there are attempts to make alternations not only to the lexical, but also to the grammatical structure of the language. So, for example, if traditionally the dividing question with everyone was constructed as “Everybody wants to be happy, doesn't he?” it is nowadays advised to modify such questions to “Everybody wants to be happy, don't they?” The introduction of a gender neutrality policy led to some English healthcare providers being asked to change a number of words, such as “chestfeeding” instead of “breastfeeding”, “human milk” instead of “breastmilk”, “birthing parent” instead of “mother”; “second biological parent” instead of “father”.

There is the same tendency in other German languages. There are some illustrative examples given in the authoritative German dictionary Duden. In 2020, 300 “outdated terms” were removed from the dictionary. Simultaneously, there were 3000 new words and terms added to the dictionary, including Covid-19, bienenfreundlich, Geisterspiel, Lockdown, Herdenimmunität and Gendersternchen ('gender sign in writing'). The latter of these is given under the sign*, which is used to mark both male and female gender when addressing several people at once in the written form, such as “liebe Künstler*innen” [26]. At present Duden continues the popular trend of applying gender-neutral language and it aims at publishing nearly 12,000 more new dictionary entries online in the near future. “For example, if earlier there was a separate entry for the noun “pharmacist” (der Apotheker), and no entry for the female employee (die Apothekerin) but just the designation as “a feminine form of 'pharmacist' with redirection to the main 'male' dictionary entry, nowadays the definition stands out as 'a female person who basing on her professional education or approbation, has the right to work in a pharmacy' [27]. From a linguistic point of view, such an artificial effort to overcome “gender asymmetry” seems unnatural, since the German language is characterized by “general masculine meaning”, which serves to designate nouns regardless of their gender [5; 7].

In summary, neologisms which appeared due to “gender asymmetry” represent an artificial process. Such intervention against language causes criticism from many linguists, since any language is a living phenomenon that develops according to its own internal laws and does not tolerate gross external interference [1; 2].

2. Neologisms which appeared due to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the entire world community, and influenced all spheres of life: medical, economic, social, and cultural ones. Therefore, being an integral part of a person's life, language has also undergone great alterations, especially regarding the lexical component [13; 16]. The most widespread neologisms include:

– coronials.

This neologism appeared in analogy with “millennials” and refers to those who were born during the coronavirus pandemic: “Social media users speculate about a boom of pandemic babies who will be called ‘coronials’ or ‘quaranteens’. She is a coronial” [19].

– covidiot.

The word is described as a person who ignores warnings regarding public safety and health [19]. Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines it as “someone who behaves in a stupid way that risks spreading the infectious disease Covid-19” [18].

– doomsurfing.

This neologism describes the tendency to continue seeking negative news, despite the fact that this search brings feelings of anxiety and can cause depression. This term appeared because during the coronavirus pandemic, people constantly read depressing newsletters, unable to stop themselves. The word “doom” is often associated with fate, while “surfing” refers to browsing the Internet. Merriam-Webster notes that both “doomsurfing” and “doomscrolling” emerged during the pandemic to describe this compulsive behavior.

Kevin Roose, The New York Times: “I’ve been doing a lot of this kind of doomsurfing lately – falling into deep rabbit holes filled with coronavirus content, agitating myself to the point of physical discomfort, erasing any kind of hope of a good night’s sleep. Possibly, you have, too” [20].

Kathy Katella, Yale Medicine: “Are you wasting too much time looking for news about COVID-19? If you are doomsurfing, it is possibly time to take a step back and ask yourself what you really should and must know” [20].

– doomscrolling.

This neologism is similar to doomsurfing, specifically referring to looking for sad, bad news and negative information connected with COVID-19, but it is carried out with the help of a mobile phone’s screen, and the word “scroll” means to move the text or graphic on the screen in a rapid way. Harvard Health defines doomscrolling as “the habit of constantly scrolling online news headlines, which often blare bad news” and notes that “it can lead to a wide range of physical and mental health effects” [25].

– zoombombing/zoomraiding.

This term means unwanted, disruptive intrusion, usually from Internet trolls, into video conferencing. Typically, Zoombombing involves hijacking a teleconference session by adding obscene, racist, or anti-Semitic content, which logically leads to the session being closed. The neologism gained extraordinary popularity in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced many people to stay at home; consequently, video conferencing was (and continues to be) widely utilized by businesses, educational institutions and social groups. “Rik Ferguson from the security firm Trend Micro is also a recent zoombombing victim” [23].

– quarantini.

This term refers to the mixture of the words “quarantine” and “martini”. It is noteworthy that the term was first used in 2012, but regained popularity in 2020 due to the spread of COVID-19. “Deirdre and I are drinking negronis. Our hosts, Susan and Joe, are drinking something they call a quarantini” [29].

Neologisms that became popular and widespread during the epidemic of the new coronavirus infection have firmly entered the lexical structure of modern English and other languages as well.

3. Neologisms which appeared due to social media.

In the modern world, social networks have a significant influence on many, if not all, spheres of people’s lives. In a virtual social space, a person can make friends and acquaintances; they can work, study, relax, travel, and so on. Since people are so involved in virtual social media, it is bound to have a huge impact on the language of human communication. It is important to note that these words have passed into other languages unchanged; thus, in a global sense, social networks have a significant influence on all languages of the world. We are discussing, first of all, the expansion of the vocabulary of

the English language [17]. There are two large groups of neologisms that can be distinguished:

pre-existing words, which have altered and/or expanded their lexical meaning under the influence of social networks;

genuine neologisms.

Examples from the first group include:

– like.

The traditional meaning of the verb “to enjoy or approve of something/someone” remains, but has been transferred to a noun. On social networks, the word “like” is one of the most common terms. Similarly, the verb “dislike” is used primarily as a noun [19]: “Mark Zuckerberg is promising Facebook users a new button to express an emotion other than ‘like’. It’s being referred to as a ‘dislike’ button, though Zuckerberg says it’s going to be a tool to express empathy, rather than contempt” [23].

– platform.

Before its popularity in social networks, the noun “platform” had several meanings, such as “a long, flat structure at a railway station, where people get on and off trains”, “the raised part of the floor in a large room, where you can make a speech or give a musical performance”, or “promises that a political party gives if it is voted for” [18]. However, under the influence of social networks, another interpretation emerged – “an opportunity to make one’s ideas or beliefs known publicly”: “This approach contravenes Johnson’s comments in the consultation that “providers also have a duty to protect freedom of speech, and this duty extends to all meetings and activities on their premises, including those run by the student union”. I won’t stop offering a platform to so-called ‘hate speakers’” [28].

– feed.

The commonly used meaning of the verb “to feed” is “to give food to a person, animal, or any living being”, or “to produce or provide sufficient food for someone or something” [19]. Social networks have expanded the meaning of the word “feed”, and, as in the case of “like”, there has been a “shift” in meaning from a verb to a noun. Thus, the most common meaning of “feed” in modern English is “a screen or web page which can update frequently to display fresh news or information” [18]: “RSS feeds are just a special kind of web page, designed to be read by computers rather than people” [29].

– hater.

The verb “hate” has also been transformed into the noun “hater” – “somebody who tells or posts bad stuff about somebody else or criticizes their achievements in a poor way, especially online on the net [18].

– content.

While the traditional meaning of the word refers to “the articles or parts that are contained in written material”, the contemporary meaning used in social media is “any ideas contained in a piece of writing or somebody’s speech”: “You have a preview view of this article while we are checking your access. When we have confirmed access, the full article content will load” [29].

The examples above demonstrate how words that previously existed in the English language are enriched with new meaning, often “transitioning” to another part of speech, and, having secured a new meaning in English, are subsequently translated into other languages, including Russian, due to social networks.

There is also a significant number of genuine neologisms, which mostly appeared in the past decade due to social media [16]:

– trolling.

The main meaning of trolling is “the action of leaving a very bad, insulting message online on the net in order to hurt somebody” . However, etymologically it is related to the character “troll”, and there can be observed fact that the lexical meaning has been significantly expanded [18].

– cyberbullying.

This word means “the activity of harassing others online to hurt or frighten another user, especially by sending them harmful messages” [22]: “The show issued a public plea for viewers to stop cyberbullying and harassing its contestants” [23].

– crowdfunding.

This noun means “the practice of raising a large number of small amounts of money from many people, typically via the Internet or social media, to fund a project or venture” [21]. “Campaigns on the crowdfunding site raised more money for wildfire survivors with high incomes than for those who need help most, researchers found” [29].

– crowdsourcing.

This word means “the activity of obtaining information or services by soliciting contributions from a large group of people, especially from an online community” [20]. “Evidence suggests that crowdsourcing succeeds when it’s designed for specific tasks – and when the incentives attract the most effective collaborators” [29].

– livestream.

This neologism refers to “broadcasting real-time video content over the internet as events happen” [18]: “The world’s largest and most influential video platform wants to persuade a lot more content creators to broadcast live” [29].

– viral.

This term is used to describe something that rapidly gains popularity or becomes well known by being posted online or sent from person to person by email, phone, or messaging apps. Forbes notes that “there is a one-in-a-million chance for your content to go viral” [24].

– blog.

This word means “a regular record of somebody’s speculations, thoughts, opinions, or experiences that someone posts on the net for other users to get to know” [21]. Related terms include “blogger” – someone who writes or maintains a blog, and “vlog” – a video blog.

– clickbait.

This neologism means “articles, photos, pictures, etc. posted online that are aimed to draw attention and stimulate internet users to click on the links to some particular websites” [21]. “We were just another clickbait factory with the same deceptive ad practices, temperamental managers, and constant need to copy our competitors and replace their images with lifted ones” [28].

– app.

This abbreviation refers to “a virtual program or a part of a software which is projected for some specific purpose, and which can be downloaded on your mobile phone or another gadget or device” [18].

– influencer.

This term refers to someone who is often paid by an organization and who can promote products and services on social media, which can motivate other users to purchase them: “Influencers like Lil’ Miquela and Mia Zelu have millions of followers and generate serious income, despite being created with artificial intelligence” [29].

– follower.

This neologism means “somebody who shows support, interest or admiration for another person, group, or idea” on social media platforms. The term gained prominence with the rise of social media platforms [18]. “Clips of these exchanges built him a huge following – more than 5m followers on X and 7m on TikTok – that helped him mobilise the youth vote for President Donald Trump” [23].

– flashmob.

This neologism means “a group of those individuals who have arranged by emails or mobile devices to get together in a specific place at one and the same time in order to carry out some common activity in order to draw attention to some issue and then to leave” [20]. “New York flashmob ready to ‘dance Hillary Clinton into the White House’” [28].

– hashtag.

This word appeared in English and other languages due to social media, as it is “used on social media to categorize content or describe a general subject” [22].

– meme.

This neologism means “an idea, image, video, etc. that can spread online very fast” [22]. “Internet culture is saturated with memes, but how would you explain a meme to someone who doesn't get it?” [29].

– phishing.

Etymologically linked with “fishing”, this neologism refers to “an effort to trick someone into giving or spreading information online, social media or by email or any messengers that would allow someone else to take money from them, for example, by taking finance out of their bank account” [21].

As the examples show, the English language continues to expand its vocabulary through the emergence of new lexical meanings of existing words, as well as through the emergence of neologisms due to social processes. It is important to note that due to the process of language globalization, the popularity of the English language and social networks throughout the world, neologisms spread and move into other languages, including Russian, and in some cases take root and occupy strong positions there.

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